

Foreword

This issue of the Philippine Journal of Social Development (PJSJ) is notable for two reasons: it is coming out on the golden anniversary of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) and it is focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having to do with poverty, hunger, gender, housing, transport, and other urgent concerns of Filipinos striving to live a full life—what we in CSWCD call *ganap na buhay*.

The goal of this journal issue is to promote analysis and dialogue about social development concerns and practices related to the building of sustainable, safe, and inclusive cities and communities primarily in the Philippine context but these can also be connected to other contexts, be they regional or global. The CSWCD vision is “Justice, Peace, and Sustainable Well-Being of the Filipino People and the Global Community,” which is premised on the close interrelationships between and among local, national, regional, and global realities and aspirations. The PJSJ, being the national double-blind refereed journal of the CSWCD, “is committed to the promotion of socially responsive and appropriate interventions that engender social equality and challenge discrimination and oppression of marginalized sectors and populations.”

This PJSJ issue is coming out on the second year of the implementation of the SDGs, issued by the United Nations at the end of 2015 and covering up to the year 2030, to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which spanned the period 2001 - 2015. In the words of the United Nations Development Program:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

These 17 Goals build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The goals are interconnected—often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another.

The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The SDGs are an inclusive agenda. They tackle the root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet.

Articles featured in this PJSJSD issue center on the SDGs and discuss social development theories, perspectives, policies, programs, and innovative solutions that can help build a useful body of new knowledge on the following key concerns, among others: safe, adequate, and affordable housing; cheap, sustainable, and accessible transportation systems for everyone; inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups such as women and children; universal accessibility of inclusive, green, and safe public spaces; constructive and mutually beneficial links between and among rural, urban, and peri-urban areas particularly on the issue of food security.

The CSWCD has a rich trove of development praxis spanning decades of living and working with diverse sections of marginalized and vulnerable groups in cities and communities. Professor Emeritus and former Dean Amaryllis T. Torres captures this in her introductory article entitled “The CSWCD’s Quest for Sustainable Human Development,” a reprise of the speech she delivered as keynote speaker during the CSWCD recognition rites in 2016. She takes off from the gains and gaps resulting from the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and reflects on the enduring challenges confronting development professionals in the age of the SDGs. Can the CSWCD be proud of a distinct and exemplary tradition in development work wholeheartedly embraced and practiced by its graduates through decades of community immersion, and empowering as well as inclusive development interventions? Her article leans toward the affirmative, providing an eloquent basis for celebrating half a century of the CSWCD’s journey with those fortunate enough to enter its portals.

Poverty remains the foremost concern of the SDGs, and children in poverty are among the most vulnerable both at global and national levels. Asst. Prof. Excelsa Tongson explores this topic in a participatory way through her article entitled “Poverty in the Eyes of Children.” She contributes to a nascent but growing appreciation of the role of children in social development, beginning with their awareness of the key issues

affecting society. She discusses the results of her small exploratory study which shows that young children ages three to five with no direct experience of poverty can just the same reveal an understanding of it.

SDG Goal Number 2 is phrased this way: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.” Dr. Teresita Villamor Barrameda’s article on “Surviving in the City through Home Gardens” is urgent and relevant, considering the levels of hunger and food insecurity afflicting the nation, resulting in severe malnutrition and stunting of many Filipino children. After providing a historical overview, she presents a small case study featuring home gardeners in Barangay UP Campus, showing how household-based approaches can prosper in urban communities, especially if there is support from local government. She provides a gendered picture of a practical and replicable development intervention that could be integrated in resettlement plans and programs.

In her article, Asst. Prof. Rowena A. Laguilles reveals that one billion people worldwide live in slums. SDG Goal Number 11 takes note of this by emphasizing safe, adequate, and affordable housing for all. The phrase “for all” underscores the necessity of universality and inclusivity, making it imperative to re-examine housing policies and programs from this vantage point. The author focuses on surfacing gender issues in housing, on which current Philippine policies and programs are largely silent, despite mandates contained in legislation such as the Magna Carta of Women which provides for women’s right to housing. Through a case study featuring the PATAMABA Home Owners’ Association in Angono, she reveals how women’s invisibility in housing policies as well as their lack of participation in housing programs lead to unfortunate results that could have easily been avoided if enabling and participatory mechanisms for women had been in place.

The proliferation of slums is not the only urban bane plaguing Philippine cities. In the case of Metro Manila, the horrific traffic situation is exacting a huge economic and social toll especially on commuters, aside from the alarming environmental costs of heavy pollution. It is in this context that Maritess D. Cruz provides a refreshing and alternative piece on the merits of cycling as a non-motorized mode of transport, which again should be a choice for all. She zeroes in on the gender aspects of cycling, showing the deterrents to women’s engagement in cycling stemming from intersecting inequalities based mainly on class and gender. She discusses the issues women face in urban transport and identifies key dimensions that sustainable cities can consider to promote cycling among them.

Sustainable cities, according to her, are also necessarily gender-responsive and cycling-friendly cities.

The last article in this issue is entitled “Paths to Power: Case Studies of Filipino Women Transcending Dynastic Politics” by Camille Genevieve M. Salvador. This is a most appropriate concluding piece and can be very much connected to SDG Goal no. 16, “Reduce inequality between and among countries.” The world is now experiencing extreme inequality of wealth and power, with eight men owning as much as the poorer half of the people on the entire planet. In the Philippine context, the 40 richest Filipinos accounted for more than three-fourths of the annual increase in income recorded in 2011. And in 2012, the top 20% of families had a 46.8% share of the total income of the country, while the bottom 20% shared a mere 6.8%. How is the power of wealth manifested in politics? Through the predominance of dynasties in securing political positions at both national and local levels. Can the dynastic barriers to democratic and transformative politics be transcended? The author says yes, by citing case studies of women who did not come from powerful dynasties and yet managed to get elected because they had strong educational and professional backgrounds, had civic experience before their political careers, and had good connections with social and women’s movements.

Ultimately, power relations determine the outcomes of development initiatives, particularly those connected with the pursuit of the SDGs. “Let no one be left behind” will not be much more than a catchy but empty slogan if power continues to be wielded and monopolized by a wealthy few who are mostly men, white, living in the North, well-educated, healthy, and able. Building power from below, in an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable way, is what development work is all about. And this is what CSWCD has been saying and doing all these years.

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